

2162 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

PHONE: 202-225-6116
FAX: 202-225-5590

WWW.PINGREE.HOUSE.GOV



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CHELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT, MAINE

June 19, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly,

I write today to strongly urge you to act quickly to raise the cap on H-2B visas to allow for the processing of additional temporary worker visas. As you know, the Fiscal Year 2017 Omnibus Appropriations bill included language allowing the Department to lift the cap.

Small businesses all across Maine continue to struggle to operate due to the inability to hire additional seasonal employees and the lack of a Returning Worker Exemption (RWE) during this fiscal year.

Maine's economy thrives during the busy summer months, buoyed by an influx of tourism to the state – our state lives up to its nickname, "Vacationland." Small businesses play a key role in this industry and rely each year on temporary workers here on H-2B temporary visas. Unfortunately, the Administration's delay in raising the visa cap, along with several other factors, has unnecessarily strained these small businesses by preventing them from hiring the temporary workers they need to operate at full capacity. Maine's tourism industry has experienced significant growth in each of the last four years and I am very concerned that this disruption in temporary workers will have a negative effect on that trend.

I have heard from small businesses across Maine who benefit from the H-2B program and rely heavily on these workers to fill positions they otherwise cannot fill. I urge you to quickly raise the cap on these visas and work with the Department of Labor and Congress to find a lasting solution to this program that is so important to many small businesses in Maine.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress